

ORYX

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Notes and News

In August and September three calves were born to the World Herd of Arabian Oryxes at Phoenix, Arizona, two of them, born on successive days, males, but the third, at long last, a female—the first female in eight calves. This brings the total of the herd to 16:

At Last—a seven belong to the FPS (three adults and four calves),
Female five to the World Wildlife Fund (four adults and one calf),
Oryx Calf two to the London Zoo (one adult and one calf) and two calves to the Phoenix Zoo. It is of

some interest that Pat, the father of the female calf and one of the original three captured in Operation Oryx, was being used as a sire for the first time. In October the chairman and the hon. secretary of the FPS, Peter Scott and Richard Fitter, were able to visit Phoenix Zoo on their way to the San Diego Zoo's 50th anniversary celebrations, and see for themselves how well the oryxes are being cared for as their excellent breeding record shows. One of the calves has been named Peter after FPS chairman Peter Scott.

For every animal seen in a zoo two or three die in the process of capture, Major Ian Grimwood, lately chief game warden of Kenya told the symposium on Zoos and Conservation, which was the centrepiece of the San Diego Zoo's Jubilee Celebrations in October. Other speakers added that for some species, such as the orang-utan, the losses were much higher, and might be eight dead for every one exhibited. With a view to reducing these

The "Gun-Happy" Catchers

losses, especially for rare species caught for captive breeding programmes, the conference asked the Survival Service Commission of IUCN to appoint a co-ordinator to keep in touch with the many teams now using drug-darting techniques to catch wild animals all over the world. Some horrifying stories are told of inexperienced gun-happy operators under the illusion that such techniques are easy. The Symposium was chaired by Peter Scott, and Richard Fitter read a paper surveying the successes of captive breeding as a method of conserving vanishing species. All animals in danger are specially marked

at the San Diego Zoo, which is generally acknowledged to be the best zoo in the world. A special feature of the celebrations was the presence of Martha, last known passenger pigeon in the world, specially borrowed for the occasion from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

The FPS has written to congratulate the only whaling company in Peru, Cia Ballenera del Norte, on its decision to ban all hunting of both blue and hump-back whales for two years. The company's decision is entirely voluntary, in the interests of these two highly endangered species of whales. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has banned the hunting of both these whales by pelagic fleets, but Peru is not a member of the IWC, and the company operates a shore-based station. Considerable numbers of these whales had been taken by the company in recent years: in 1965 80 blue and 118 hump-backs. In the case of the blue whale this probably represented a considerable proportion of the whole world population.

Ban by Peruvian Whalers

Not more than ten Sumatran rhinos are definitely known to exist in Malaya, according to Mr J. A. Hislop in a paper read at the IUCN Bangkok Conference last year and printed on page 353, though he thinks there may be about thirty. The largest known group consists of three animals, a pair with one young, in the Sungei Dusun reserve, created in 1964, in northern Selangor (see the map on page 355). The Bangkok Conference passed a resolution asking the Malaysian Government to ensure effective measures to protect these rhinos, and it is in this reserve that an American research worker, David Strickland, has been making a scientific study of the Sumatran rhino, planned by the Malayan Nature Society, and supported by the World Wildlife Fund and the FPS. His report, expected soon, will show that, despite certain deficiencies, given proper management the reserve could provide considerable protection for the rhinos and other species. However, the Malayan Zoological Society, alarmed at the dangers to the rhinos from poachers and forest clearance, recently secured the necessary authorisation to capture a female rhino in the reserve to be taken to the zoo at Kuala Lumpur and kept in a large enclosure nearby, with the intention of capturing another one later and breeding them. The FPS was one of many conservation bodies that urged the Zoological Society not to proceed with this plan in view of the smallness of the population, the likelihood of breaking up a breeding group, and the immense risks involved in using tranquillisers and capture guns. The proposal has now been dropped. Nevertheless the Zoological Society had good reason to be anxious, for, although Sungei Dusun has been gazetted as a reserve, there have been no guards to enforce protection. (It is believed that

The Sumatran Rhino in Malaya

some have now been sent from the National Park.) Moreover, since 1960 2,000 hectares of forest on the eastern boundary of the reserve have been cleared, and it is believed that plans to fell a further 2,000 hectares include some areas inside the reserve itself. (The difficulty here is that the forests are the concern of the federal government, while the reserve was declared by the Selangor state government.) Recently, however, a Canadian expert on parks and wildlife, Mr W. E. Stevens, has gone to Malaya for two years under the Colombo scheme to investigate and report on every reserve to the central government, and it is to be hoped that better protection for the rhinos will be an early recommendation.

The Murchison Falls in Uganda have been saved from the threatened hydro-electric plant, which the Electricity Board have now decided to site elsewhere. The proposal to site it at the Falls, in the national park,

**Plane for
Poacher Control
in Uganda**

had brought protests from all parts of the world, including one from the FPS. The Frankfurt Zoological Society has expressed its pleasure at the news in a practical way by donating £2000 to help buy a small plane for poacher control in the three Uganda national parks. The urgent need for such a plane is underlined by an item in the latest report from the Director, Mr Francis Katete. A special effort by the wardens in Queen Elizabeth park, with intensive patrolling, resulted in the arrest of 86 people, the capture of 22 illegal canoes and 61 wire snares. In the Murchison Falls park 63 offenders were arrested and 23 canoes confiscated. A poachers' hide-out on a small island in the Nile was discovered which 13 men were using as a base for hunting crocodiles; the men were arrested, the gear confiscated and the camp destroyed. (Within a few hours two large bull elephants had taken over the island.) Operations such as these will be greatly facilitated when a plane can be used.

In a special supplement devoted to Botswana, the former Bechuanaland, on the achievement of independence in September *The Times* devoted just 56 words to the wildlife of the country and two small photographs. Yet this is the country which the ecologists Thane Riney and Peter Hill described

**Wildlife v.
Cattle
in Botswana**

in 1960 as having "the largest concentration of plains game in Africa today". They also said that most of the wild and marginal lands "showed signs of extreme abuse by over-grazing and over-frequent burning, and much of the country was in an advanced state of depletion; much was still deteriorating", a warning that has gone unheeded. Much of Botswana is arid and better suited for wildlife, which, properly managed, could be a major source of both food and tourist revenue, than for the cattle which are the country's major industry. But in the interest of cattle many miles of veterinary disease control fences have been erected,

frequently obstructing migration routes, with the inevitable result of animals dying in hundreds on the wire and poachers reaping an easy harvest. Yet a few hundred miles away in South Africa, says Major Bruce Kinloch, who has recently surveyed the wildlife situation in Botswana, "on one sheep farm alone 2000 springbok are being culled every year from a herd of 7000". Botswana can boast 27,000 square miles of reserves, and yet the game department staff comprises one Game Officer, three Game Rangers, 20 Game Scouts and one clerk. Of the reserved land, 20,000 square miles is the Central Kalahari Bushman (and Game) Reserve, where there are no game staff at all, and which the Game Officer and his staff cannot even enter without a permit. The Chobe Game Reserve, teeming with wildlife, has one game warden and five scouts equipped with one old Land Rover and five bicycles, but both this and the remarkable Moremi Wildlife Reserve of the Batawana tribe, described by June Kay in *ORYX*, August, 1963, could be immense tourist attractions. For Botswana, sandwiched as it is between two countries with thriving tourist industries, South Africa and Rhodesia, and with the Chobe Reserve only a 1½-hours drive from the Victoria Falls, tourism based on wildlife is the obvious answer to several problems. With a properly staffed and well equipped Game Department, some investment in hotels and other amenities, and above all priority for wildlife in certain areas, it could become a major revenue earner. And in these areas the most economic way to raise protein is by game not cattle.

News of an imaginative effort to save the Atlas deer, or Barbary stag, from extinction comes from Dr E. F. Hufnagl, an FPS member in North Africa. The only wild deer in Africa, this subspecies of the red deer lives in the dense brush woods of the Medjerda

**Scheme to
Save the
Atlas Deer**

Hills at the eastern end of the Atlas Mountains, on the Tunisian-Algerian border. Harried by poachers, cattle herdsmen, bush fires, and, during the Algerian war, soldiers, their numbers dwindled from an estimated 400 in 1950 to about 150 in 1964. The departure of the French from Algeria brought a new danger in an increase in wild boars, which began to invade the deer's habitat. The French had hunted the wild boars and kept them down, but the Moslems regard them as unclean. However, a German zoologist, Herr Henry Makowski from Hamburg, has persuaded a number of enlightened Tunisian landowners to set aside 1,230 acres in the Medjerda Hills for the deer. With the aid of the German-Tunisian Society he founded a "Curatorium for the Preservation of the Atlas Deer", and helped by the West German review *Wild und Hund* (Game and Dog), collected 35,000 D. Mark from wealthy German sportsmen with which to fence the area, a circumference of over six miles. He then enlisted the help of the nearby small Tunisian town of Ghardimaou, and several hundred Tunisian farmworkers and unemployed took part in a

gigantic one-day drive to get as many of the deer into the enclosure as possible. The numbers that went in are not known, but the Tunisian authorities are optimistic about building up the herd. Ghardimaou expects to become in time the centre of a new tourist attraction with photo-safaris to the Atlas deer.

In the course of an extensive survey of wildlife sanctuaries in India, an American ecologist, Juan Spillett has been able to supply information about the great Indian rhinoceros, which, coupled with figures from the Chief Conservator of Forests in Nepal, R. G. M. Willan, and E. P. Gee's figures, brings the total estimated population to some 740, compared with last year's figure of 625. The Kaziranga sanctuary in Assam now has some 400 rhinos, and Nepal 165. Mr Spillett also endorsed what many others have said that overgrazing by domestic livestock and trespassing by villagers for firewood and fodder are among the most serious threats to India's wildlife.

Increase in Great Indian Rhinos

The status of the Kashmir stag, the hangul, is precarious, reports E. P. Gee in the Bombay Natural History Society *Journal*, following his survey in October 1965. Numbers have been decreasing fast—from several thousand at the turn of the century to 250 in 1960 and last year something between 180 (Mr Gee's estimate) and 250 (official figure), and with an alarming imbalance in the sexes. The main habitat of the deer in Upper and Lower Dachigam was made a sanctuary in 1951, but this has not been implemented. Mr Gee's main recommendation in his report was that Lower and Upper Dachigam should become eventually a national park, and in the autumn of this year he had the pleasure of witnessing a proposal to up-grade the area to a national park passed at a meeting of the Kashmir State Wild Life Board presided over by the Governor, Dr Karan Singh, and with the Forest Minister present. A 4-5-acre enclosure is also to be made for a small herd of the deer to enable a closer study of them to be made. It is to be hoped that his other recommendations, including the elimination of sheep breeding and cattle grazing, will also be pushed forward. Mr Gee reports that the Chief Conservator of Forests and the newly appointed Game Warden of Kashmir are keenly interested in the preservation of wildlife and "the prospects of something being done in this part of the world are good". While he was in Kashmir Mr Gee also heard good news of the markhor from Colonel Nedou, former Game Warden of Kashmir. Colonel Nedou had seen 11 of these wild sheep, and a friend reported 35-40. One reason for the increased numbers may be that the Kajinag area, in the extreme west, where they were seen, is near the cease-fire line between India and Pakistan, and for five miles on each side of the line no shots are allowed. Another case of it being an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

Kashmir Stag and the Markhor

“Extremely rare and may even be extinct”, is the description in the Red Book of Endangered Species of Tristram’s woodpecker, a bird found only in North Korea in recent times. But a Korean expedition

Korean Woodpecker Not Extinct

this year discovered two nests, one with a pair feeding six young, the other with five eggs. The discovery is described in the first number of *Korean Nature*, published in English by the Korean Association for Protection of Nature.

The North Korean Government had protected this rare woodpecker by designating its habitat near Kaesong a natural monument and prohibiting hunting of the bird. The expedition concluded that “at present there are several score of them in our country”. Another writer in *Korean Nature* suggests that tigers, though still very scarce, have increased in the mountain regions in the north in recent years. He lists a female with three cubs and two other individuals seen in 1957, a male caught in a trap set for wild boar in 1959, a dead tiger found in 1964 and a live one seen this year.

An exciting discovery of an animal hitherto known only from fossils occurred in Australia this summer. This is a small marsupial pygmy possum *Burrhamys parvus*. It was found in a ski hut on Mt. Hotham, and identified by Mr R. Warneke of the Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Department in Melbourne, where it still is. It is easily identified by its teeth, for it has large sectorial premolars with vertical grooves down the side and a serrated cutting edge,

“Fossil” Marsupial Found Alive

quite unlike those of any other phalanger. The species was discovered in 1896 by Robert Broom in fragments of bone found in New South Wales caves, but because of the resemblance of the teeth to the rat-kangaroo it was not recognised as a phalanger until the material was re-examined in 1956. Four inches long, with a six-inch tail, the specimen in Melbourne is the only known live one in the world. A lot of possums will be having their teeth examined from now on.

In April of this year Tasmania declared the first of a new kind of reserve, a faunal district. This covers a large area of the mountainous south-west, 1,600,000 acres with many lakes and tarns and extensive plains, and probably includes all Tasmania’s marsupial fauna. A faunal district does not have the restrictions of a sanctuary; all hunting is prohibited, but Government sanction has to be obtained to impose any other restrictions. This is because

New Reserves in Tasmania

much of the area is to be used for hydro-electric development, and the Animals and Birds Protection Board hopes that when this is done complete sanctuary laws will apply. Off the east coast of Tasmania Maria island, 23,000 acres with a great variety of habitat, is to become a National Fauna Reserve, where the Board plans to introduce native

fauna and encourage some tourist development, while keeping other areas in a primitive state. Tasmania is remarkable in that more than one-eighth of the country has been reserved for wildlife in one way or another—more than 2,200,000 acres out of 16,885,000, a greater area for its size, as the chairman Dr Eric Guiler points out, than any other state in the Commonwealth. There are five national parks, two of them over 20,000 acres, and the 58 sanctuaries, many of them islands, include Goose Island for the protection of the Cape Barren goose.

The wildlife of Taiwan (Formosa) has been seriously depleted, is still declining, and there is widespread indifference to its protection, according to Dr George C. Ruhle in his advisory report on *National Parks and Reserves for Taiwan* prepared for IUCN and

Disappearing Wildlife in Formosa

the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, the result of a four-month survey in 1965. Clouded leopard is one of several species probably now extinct, sika deer are in very small numbers (in the wild), and bear, pangolin, serow and dugong are among the seriously threatened. Taiwan's butterfly merchants buy between thirty and fifty million butterflies a year, and many are used for decorating goods such as lampshades and book covers. Thousands of live and stuffed birds and mammals are sold. Hunting laws are not enforced and no funds are available for wildlife protection. The aborigines, whose numbers are increasing, pose a special problem, for they are supplied with hunting permits and bullets free, and their hunting includes not only meat for themselves but marketable commodities such as antlers and skins. Dr Ruhle says, however, that Taiwan still has a chance to create splendid national parks in the extensive block of thickly forested mountains that runs the central length of the island, and which, thanks to its inaccessibility combined with the reputation of the head-hunters, has remained little disturbed and still contains a remnant of wildlife. Dr Ruhle makes detailed recommendations for the planning of parks, reserves and recreation areas. What is not clear is how much he succeeded in shaking the almost total indifference to wildlife or its conservation of both people and government.

A scientist at Nairobi University College, Dr Bristol Foster, has been photographing the left side of the neck of every giraffe he finds in and near the Nairobi National Park, so that he can identify individual animals and plot their movements. Giraffes have

Taking the Giraffe's "Neck-Prints"

recognisably different neck patterns, and the left and right side markings are not identical. Early this year Dr Foster could identify 130 different giraffes. The information is wanted to enable the park authorities to know where these giraffes go in the wet season when they move out of the park, for obviously the protection of these areas is vitally important.

The cougar, the mountain lion of North America, once thought to be extinct in eastern Canada, is to-day on the increase and even extending its range into areas where it has never before been recorded, according to Bruce S. Wright, writing in *Canadian Audubon*.

**Cougars
Increase in
East Canada**

When it was driven out of all settled areas in eastern Canada, the cougar retreated into the vast forests of New Brunswick where a small remnant survived. But the increase of white-tailed deer, the cougar's chief prey, due to the abandoning of farm land and the felling of forests for pulpwood, has brought these large cats out again, and they have been seen in some places for the first time for 100 years and in others for the first time. A game warden actually watched a cougar walk across from New Brunswick into Nova Scotia, and others turned up on Cape Breton Island, attracted by the densest population of deer in the province. One female with a large cub even wandered into the suburbs of Montreal in March, 1959, lured by a winter concentration of park deer, and causing something of a sensation. Only Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island have not reported cougars in the last ten years. Little is known about the cougar, which is exceedingly difficult to study in the inaccessible places that it favours, but in 1964 a co-operative ecological study, to last 4-5 years, was started by the Idaho Forest and Game Department and the Universities of Idaho and British Columbia. The field work is being done in the Idaho Primitive Area, one of the few places where it is possible to study a population of cougars rather than a remnant.

The Canadian Wildlife Service has started an intensive two-year biological study of the barren-ground caribou in the Manitoba-Keewatin area to find out what are the causes of the continuing severe decline in numbers. In 1949 Canadians were

**Finding Out
How to Save
the Caribou**

shocked to discover that the caribou herds had shrunk from some two-three million to 670,800. A 1955 survey showed the process was continuing: numbers were estimated at 278,000, and in 1959 they were down to some 200,000. Over-hunting, poor calf survival in several bad springs and destruction of winter range by fire are all believed to be important factors in the decline. The aim of the research programme is to get the facts that will enable regional management plans for the caribou to be drawn up. It is clearly urgent that this should be done soon. As John Kelsall pointed out in an article published in *ORYX* in August 1964, Vol. 7, No. 5, many Indians and Eskimos still derive a substantial proportion of their livelihood from the caribou. In an excellent account of the barren-ground caribou, *Tuktu* (an Eskimo name for the caribou), published by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Fraser Symington describes the caribou and their habitat and the research done so far. He urges the need first to control fires—planes equipped for “water bombing”, he says, could nip many a fire in the bud.